

February 28, 2023

Chairman Senator Guy J. Guzzone

Budget & Taxation Committee

3 West, Miller Senate Office Building

Dear Chairman Guzzone and members of the Budget & Taxation Committee:

I am writing to voice my strong support for **SB 502 Enoch Pratt Free Library – Capital Project Funding** which would provide much needed capital funding for the Enoch Pratt Free Library.

Libraries are vital community hubs, helping to stabilize neighborhoods and providing a world of opportunities to customers. In Baltimore City, where access to the internet is limited or non-existent for up to 40% of households, the Pratt Library is helping bridge the digital divide. Through partnerships with Maryland Legal Aid, the University of Maryland School of Social Work and School of Nursing, as well as Morgan State University, Pratt customers can get access to social workers, legal services, and healthcare consultations right in their own community. The Pratt gives learners of all ages free access to information and resources. The Library meeting rooms allow non-profit groups to gather and discuss essential optics for the community.

In addition to the programs mentioned above, The Pratt is currently developing a Community Pantry program. The first location will be operated out of the Southeast Anchor Branch, in a space formerly used as a cafe. This program will provide an incredibly vital and diverse neighborhood with free access to produce and pantry items, as well as other necessities. This funding would help The Pratt grow this program to other branches.

The Enoch Pratt Free Library operates one of the oldest library systems in the United states. 19 library locations are more than 50 years old, six are over a century old. The deferred maintenance at these locations has resulted in lengthy closures, depriving entire communities of library resources for months at a time. In the last 18 months alone, the Pratt *lost approximately 2,200 public service hours* due to failing heating and air conditioning systems. In addition, many libraries are not ADA compliant and have building code deficiencies. The Pratt needs funding to modernize library spaces to meet the growing demands of the community.

I fully support SB 502 and urge the committee to issue a favorable report that would result in improved library facilities that would serve customers in Baltimore City for years to come.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Emily Rosen